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LATIN *ss* INSTEAD OF INTERVOCALIC *r*

One of the standing riddles of Latin morphology is presented by the superlatives in *-issimus*. It seems clear that the suffix stands in some relation to the suffix *-simus* (from *-s-ḡmo-*) of *maximus*, *proximus*, etc., and to *-isimus* (from *-is-ḡmo-*) of *pulcherrimus*, *facillimus*, etc.; but no satisfactory way of accounting for the double *s* has yet been suggested.

Precisely the same difficulty is met in the archaic *s*-futures and *s*-subjunctives from vowel stems, such as *indicāssō*, *negāssim*, *prohibēssit*. Their parallelism with *faxo*, *faxim*, *capso*, *empsim*, etc., is perfectly obvious, and one can scarcely doubt the connection of both with the Indo-European *s*-aorist; but here again none of the various attempts to account for the double *s* etymologically has won any general acceptance.

We may get some light upon the second group of forms by observing the behavior of the *s*-aorist in Greek. In that language intervocalic *s* was regularly lost, but in all *s*-aorist forms which retained their aoristic use, and in most futures (originally aorist subjunctives), intervocalic *s* appears as *σ*: *ἔσθησα* and *ἔλυσσά* were prevented from becoming **ἔσθηα* and **ἔλυα* by the analogy of *ἔδειξα*, *ἔλειψα*, etc. (see Brugmann *Greek Grammar*³ 314). Similarly, I think, *capso*, *faxim*, etc., prevented **indicāso* and **prohibēssit* from becoming **indicāro* and **prohibērit* at the time when **genesis* was becoming *generis*. But the effort to pronounce the significant *s* of these words at a time when in other words intervocalic *s* was becoming every day less and less familiar led to an "over-correction." Instead of a simple intervocalic *s*, people pronounced a long or double *s*.

In similar fashion, the influence of *maximos*, *proximos*, *pessimos*, etc. (possibly also of **pulchersimos*, and **facilsimos* from **pulchr-is-ḡmos* and **fact-is-ḡmos*), induced a change of **ditisimos* to *ditissimos* rather than to **ditirimos*. This suffix *-isimos* is, of course, the same *-is-ḡmos* that appears in *pulcherrimus*, *facillimus*, etc., but without syncope of the antepenultimate vowel.

Double *s* for intervocalic *s* appears also in *quaeso* (*quaesso*, *CIL.* 10. 2311, Plaut. *Ps.* 1322). The perfect **quaes-si* (see Sommer *Handbuch* 612) induced the development of the present **quaeso* to *quaesso*, although in another part of the community or in a different usage the regular change to *quaero* took place. *Nāsus* (*nassum*, Plaut. *Merc.* 310), beside *nāris* and *nāres*, similarly owes its *ss* instead of *r* to **nās*, the nominative singular of the consonant stem (cf. Osthoff *MU.* 2. 48 f.). Another example may be found in *vās*, *vāsis* (*vassa*, Plaut. *Merc.* 781), although the etymology of the word is unknown. The *s* of Umbrian *vasor*, *vaso*, *vasus* would also have to be explained by analogy.

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